

CLAIMS

1. A communications system comprising a first network for the communication of data according to a first protocol and a second network for the communication of data according to a second protocol; in which each network comprises at least one node, in which the system also comprises a plurality of communication interfaces for providing communication between a first node of the first network and a second node of the second network;

in which each interface comprises means for sending values to the first node for indicating the availability of communication between that interface and the second node;

in which the system comprises selection means for selecting one of the interfaces for communicating data between the first node and the second node based on the values sent by the interfaces to the first node.

2. The communications system of claim 1 in which each interface comprises means for detecting the selection of one of the plurality of interfaces and means for modifying, on selection of the selected interface, the value sent to the first node.
3. The communications system of claim 2 in which the selection means comprises means for preferentially selecting an interface associated with the modified value.

4. The communications system of any above claim in which each interface comprises means for detecting an error condition and means for preventing the sending of values by that interface on detection of an error condition.
5. The communications system of any above claim in which each interface has means for sending the values as part of a message comprising an address representing the second node.
6. The communications system of claim 5 in which the address comprised in the message representing the same second node sent from each interface is the same.
7. The communications system of claim 5 or 6 in which the address is an IP address in which the IP address maps onto a NSAP address associated with the second network.
8. The communications system of claim 5 or 6 in which the address is an NSAP address in which the NSAP address maps onto an IP address associated with the second network.
9. The communications system of any above claim in which the protocol of the first network is TCP/IP and the protocol of the second network is ISO.
10. The communications system of claims 1 to 8 in which the protocol of the first network is ISO and the protocol of the second network is TCP/IP.

11. The communications system of any above claims in which the selection means comprises means for avoiding the use of any interface from which it is not receiving values.
12. The communications system of any above claim in which the interface provides conversion between the first and second protocols.
13. The communications system of any above claim in which the means for sending values to a node of a network is arranged to send the values by means of the protocol for that network.
14. The communications system of any above claim in which the protocols comprise a transport layer and a network layer in which the transport layer comprises means for controlling the values sent.
15. The communications system of any above claim in which the protocols comprise routing metrics in which the system comprises means for sending the values via the routing metrics.
16. A method for the communication of data between a first node in a first network and a second node in a second network, in which data is communicated in the first network according to a first protocol and data is communicated in the second network according to a second protocol; in which the method includes the step of providing a plurality of

communication interfaces for providing communication between the first node and the second node;

in which the method also includes the step of sending values from each interface to the first node indicating the availability of communication between that interface and the second node;

in which the method also includes the step of selecting one of the interfaces for communicating data between the first and second nodes, in which the selection is based on the values sent by the interfaces to the first node.

17. The method of claim 16 including the steps of detecting the selection of the selected interface and modifying, the value sent by the selected interface to the first node.
18. The method of claim 17 including the step of preferentially selecting the interface sending the modified value.
19. The method of any one of claims 16 to 17 in which the protocols comprise a transport layer and a network layer including the step of controlling the values sent using the transport layer.
20. The method of any one of claims 16 to 19 in which the protocols comprise routing metrics including the step of sending the values using the routing metrics.